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LEVANTAMIENTO! The 1824 Chumash Uprising Reconsidered

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TRADITIONAL interpretations of the largest uprising of California Indians during the Mission Era (1769-1834) hold that it was a fairly brief, unsuccessful, military revolt against the exploitation of the Mexican government.¹ The outpouring of material on Chumash culture over the past fifteen years, most of it based on the publication of the previously unavailable field notes of ethnographer John P. Harrington, forces a reconsideration of the uprising from a Chumash perspective.² Moreover, the discovery and publication of confessional aids (*confesionarios*) composed by the Franciscans in the Chumash area along with responses to questionnaires (*interrogatorios*) and other pertinent documents permit a reassessment of the uprising from a clerical viewpoint. Taken together, these sources reveal an uprising markedly different from conventional wisdom. Chumash selected both secular and religious targets and in addition to their celebrated fight at Mission La Purísima Concepción, they manifested at least three distinguishable patterns of flight from the Euro-Indian environment. One of these flights culminated in the successful creation of a new culture by the Chumash in the interior.

Chumash Ethnography

As a departure point, consider Harrington's contribution to Chumash studies. As an ethnographer laboring on his own and later employed by the Smithsonian Institution, Harrington worked with Chumash informants from 1912-1928, and afterward, he returned episodically to collecting information on these Indians until his death in 1961. Secretive and not given to publishing his scholarship, his most significant publications have been posthumous. In the areas of material culture,³ economic activity,⁴ folklore,⁵ cosmology,⁶ and ritual ceremony,⁷ Harrington's information has provided an

astonishing range of hitherto unknown insights into Chumash life. From this new information an approximation can be attempted of a Chumash society in which Christianity sought to effect change.

The overlap and interweaving of political and religious power defined the parameters of village life. Hereditary chieftainship resided in the *wot* who in turn was assisted by a *paxa* or ceremonial leader and two messengers known as *ksen*. The *paxa* held a doubly important post for he constituted a link with and sometimes the leadership of the religious *?antap* cult. In major villages at least a dozen *?antap* operated performing ceremonies and rituals locally and travelling to disparate villages to participate in ceremonies there. The *?antap* cult helped to integrate Chumash society across geographical boundaries and membership in the cult enhanced a person's status.⁸

Within the village the *paxa* usually initiated adolescents into the use of *datura* (*Datura meteloides*), a plant with hallucinogenic properties. Since the effective dose was slightly less than the lethal, knowledge of the drug's effects and how to administer it became specialized skills in Chumash society. Individuals who developed such skills, whether members of the *?antap* cult or not, were highly valued and were known in Spanish as *toloacheros*, those who administered *toloache*, the Spanish word for *datura*.⁹ *Toloacheros* assumed importance because adult Chumash of both sexes routinely ingested the drug. Taking *datura* enabled an Indian to contact his or her supernatural guardian, to reinforce that bond with the dream helper who would enable the petitioner to obtain either a specific goal or a general increase in supernatural powers. Individuals of all stations used it including shamen and curers, the latter administering it occasionally to their patients. Chumash used *datura* for individual rather than collective reasons, and people consumed it routinely in the village rather than at a special site. *Datura* suffused all of Chumash society. It stood at the center of Chumash life fully integrated into mythology, used in religion, medicine, and personal spiritual growth. The chewing of *pespibata* (*Nicotiana attenuata*), a native tobacco known for its potent effects, frequently accompanied the taking of *datura* and was generally associated with the hallucinogen. Franciscan missionaries were alert to the use of *pespibata* or *toloache* by their charges.

Chumash personal conduct, involving a degree of sexual activity shocking to European standards, posed a behavioral challenge to the Spanish priests. By Chumash standards sexual liaisons could be

accepted between the unmarried, between the married if the person desired was a sibling's or sibling's equivalent (brother or sister-in-law) spouse, and between men through the acknowledgement of *joyas* or transvestites. In this society marriage proved a fragile institution which could be readily set aside. Since the padres considered the husband-wife relationship the center of European society, they seem never to have understood the centrality of the sibling relationship to Chumash culture. To the Chumash the relationship between siblings, either same sex or opposite, proved so strong that nothing, not even sexual jealousy could be allowed to harm it. In trying to ferret out kinship patterns between sexual partners then, the Franciscans probably employed the terms "grandfather" (*abuelito*) and "uncle" (*tio*) in misleading ways.

In a society with both a high degree of sexual activity and ritual it was inevitable that the Chumash would engage in activities offensive to Christian doctrine. Three of these practices merit our consideration. Chumash women believed that if they did not kill their first-born child then they would never have another. Such belief led to abortion or infanticide.¹⁰ The Chumash propitiated spirits and dieties by making offerings within the village in an enclosure dominated by painted poles topped with feathers. Outside the village they scattered seeds and sometimes feathers in certain areas to acknowledge the existence and largess of a particular god.¹¹ Finally, the Chumash engaged in certain dance rituals which the clergy found repulsive. The Coyote Dance, a favored ritual usually performed away from the priest's eyes, involved a single man with his body painted and wearing a loin cloth, dancing and singing before an assembled crowd. As an informant remembered:

During the last part of . . . the song which Coyote sang, he was trying to persuade someone to come over to lick his penis. But by the time of the last verse of the song, he had lost all hope and so did it himself . . . When he finished he squatted down and defecated amid the people.¹²

Another dance between Coyote and the Devil, including defecation, was performed at Mission Santa Barbara and involved Chumash dancers from several missions.¹³ Here the observer must wonder whether the Chumash used the dance to resist Christianity by incorporating the Euro-Christian Devil into their Coyote ritual enabling them thereby to engage in behavior that the priests considered repugnant.

Christianization Efforts

Christianization efforts by Franciscans in the Chumash area began with the founding of Mission San Luis Obispo in 1772. A decade elapsed before the friars could establish another, San Buenaventura in 1782, and then within five years they began Santa Barbara (1786) and La Purísima Concepción (1787). Not until 1804, just twenty years prior to the insurrection, did work on Santa Ynez begin.¹⁴ The last three missions established in the area witnessed the Chumash uprising.

The California missions, deriving from the mission experience in Mexico, operated on the principle of immersion. Converts were to be located in or adjacent to the mission compound in order to contribute their labor to the survival of the institution and to learn in every facet of daily life the meaning of being Christian. Priests tried diligently to extirpate indigenous cult activity and to inculcate the values of a Roman Catholic and Spanish society. From the wearing of European styled clothing deemed appropriate for Indians, to farming, herding, riding horses, making adobe bricks, singing in the choir, learning catechism, receiving the sacraments, and the sequestering of unmarried women, the padres sought to meet all Indian needs and to infuse all Indian life with a new socio-religious order through the mission environment.¹⁵

To accomplish these tasks the Franciscans had important advantages in the Chumash area. They regarded these Indians highly and assigned priests of a somewhat better quality than those found elsewhere in the system. In terms of rectitude of personal conduct, thoughtful pursuit of conversion amongst their charges, and mission administration, these priests distinguished themselves amongst their peers.¹⁶ Moreover, the ratio of priests to Mission Indians stood at an impressively high level: at La Purísima 1: 760 in 1804, at Santa Ynez: 1: 285 in 1806, and at Santa Barbara and San Buenaventura 1: 510 and 1: 788 respectively.¹⁷ When these ratios are compared to the 1:800 that obtained in colonial Mexico,¹⁸ the apparent advantage enjoyed by the missionaries in Alta California seems quite favorable.

Yet four long-standing difficulties negated the evangelical advantage and challenged the Franciscans to their limits. From the standpoint of the crown, Spanish missionary efforts in Alta California constituted the foundation of successful settlement, an effective hedge against the encroachment of foreign intrusion. Missionary work would prepare Indians to take their place as lower class citizens in

Spanish society. The crown envisioned a ten-year period from religious mission to secularized township or pueblo. In practice the ten-year plan failed as all missions remained religious congregations until a Mexican government ordered secularization in 1834.¹⁹ Thus a tension arose between priests seeking the spiritual welfare of the Indians in their missions and the Spanish colonists who sought Indian labor.

A second difficulty, related to the first, arose from language. In 1795 the Spanish crown reaffirmed its traditional policy by again decreeing that native languages in the empire should be suppressed and that all instruction should be given in Spanish so that Indians might more quickly learn it.²⁰ This crown-mandated practice conflicted with a church-imposed requirement to teach Indians in their own languages.²¹ In the Santa Barbara region six different dialects of Chumash prevailed and the priests had difficulty in communicating with neophytes in any but their native tongues. In the often cited *preguntas y respuestas* (questions and answers) to the famous *interrogatorio* (questionnaire) of 1811 posed to the priests at each of the missions,²² the replies from the Chumash illustrate the point of contention. To the query whether or not the Indians knew Spanish the responses came:

Some understand and speak Spanish. (Santa Ynez) . . . The reason why they do not know it [Spanish] is their frequent communication and intercourse with their relatives and countrymen, both Christian and heathen. (Santa Barbara)²³

The more instruction the priests gave in Spanish the greater the risk of not reaching their charges; the more they worked to master the local dialects the greater the separation of Indian from Spanish society.

The language issue, as the reply from Santa Barbara observed, related directly to culture. Christian conversion occurred in a milieu of struggle with Chumash culture, a struggle between family members and between converts at the missions and the gentiles in the villages removed from them. To succeed in this struggle against the old ways the missionary needed the aid of sound "instruction, time, and apostolic patience."²⁴

Fray José Seán, president of the missions at the time of the *interrogatorio*, described the spiritual status of the Indians in his charge in terms which typified all Chumash missions:

The son counts eighteen years as a Christian but the father is an obstinate savage still enamored of his brutal liberty and perpetual idleness. The granddaughter is a Christian but the grandmother is a pagan. Two brothers may be Christian but the sister stays in the mountains. A neophyte twenty years a Christian marries a woman but recently baptized. Such is the situation.²⁵

Reports from other friars among the Chumash bore the president out. Fray Ramón Olbés at Santa Barbara wrote:

Every effort is being made to make them forget the ancient beliefs of paganism and this is done with even greater energy with regard to those who have become Christians at an advanced age despite the fact that there still exist among them those who induce them to carry on certain pagan practices and who are reputed to have the characteristics of the pagan state.²⁶

At Santa Ynez the old men and women still persisted in their "pagan superstitions." Before being baptized they had openly fixed feathers to a pole at places they designated sacred. They "cast seeds and beads" to insure their harvests. Since baptism ". . . these feathered poles have disappeared. If such an object however, is found in the country or open fields the devotees are careful to do in secret what they formerly conducted in a public manner."²⁷

Native cultural patterns persisted inside the mission partly because of the long-standing need for the institution to be self-sufficient. Indian labor built the churches, *conventos*,²⁸ *monjerios*,²⁹ kitchens, shops, corrals, mills, water systems, tanning vats, soldiers' quarters—in short—all edifices. Indian labor sowed seed then harvested, milled or ground and cooked it. Indian labor tended flocks and herds then sheared or butchered the stock, rendered tallow and tanned hides. Without Indian labor the mission could not survive; without Indian souls to save the mission could not exist.

The struggle to achieve autarchy meant that the priests both made concessions to the neophytes to keep them attached and encouraged gentiles to enter the mission. With a fugitivism rate among converts of ten percent throughout the system and with the highest posted at Santa Barbara of fifteen percent,³⁰ the priests made such concessions as allowing Indians to visit their native villages which permitted the Christianized to retain contact with their gentile families and friends. To offset losses occasioned by fugitivism and death, priests encouraged converts to invite others to explore the Christian life. Thus newcomers, undoubtedly including *Pantap* cult members, entered

the mission compound unrestricted. These people could and did retain old cult ritual and encouraged traditional Chumash behavior.

Even strategies to build mission populations in the Chumash area with Christianized Indians worked in favor of the *Pantap* cult. By late 1804 too few Indians had been baptized at Mission Santa Ynez to sustain it, so the padres sent neophytes from the two closest missions. Within two years 132 Chumash had come from Santa Barbara and 145 from La Purísima.³¹ Such practices provided the cover whereby shamen and members of the *Pantap* could maintain contact, cult continuity, and influence.

An analogous situation existed among the island Chumash. Those seeking baptism went to the mainland where they accepted the sacrament at their mission of choice. Their names have been recorded at all but San Luis Obispo. The new converts could elect either to remain at their baptismal mission or return to the island.³² Many stayed on the mainland and some of those shared their knowledge of how to construct the *tomol*, the Chumash seagoing canoe. In this way the village social structure and *Pantap* cult could be preserved and reinforced on the mainland.³³

Confesionarios

Lest this newfound appreciation of the vitality of the indigenous Chumash culture mislead the reader, it must be noted that new evidence brings new insight as well to the missionary attempt to uproot that culture. Confessional aids (*confesionarios*), bilingual guides in the native dialect and Spanish to aid the priest in confessing the sins of his charges, had been composed and used at nearly every mission. As a priest at La Purísima wrote the president of the missions in 1810:

I believe I have written to your Reverence in these past years, that with the help of interpreters I have compiled a large catechism with the acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity, and another with what is necessary for salvation, a complete *confesionario*, and other little things, all in the language of the natives.³⁴

Putting doctrine into native tongues in the form of a catechism, bespoke what Europeans wanted Indians to learn. A *confesionario*, properly crafted, could tell the European how well the Indian practiced what he had learned or if he had learned it at all. A *confesionario*, more than any other single document, should indicate how deeply the priests could probe local society. But these documents were

as private as they were ubiquitous. Only two *confesionarios* yet have been found but they are singular. Composed approximately twenty years apart, both sought to elicit detailed information from Chumash confessants. More remarkable still, both reflect the intellectual odyssey of a single mind engaging in ongoing evangelization. These extraordinary documents, especially when considered within the sacramental framework of Penance and Easter Duty, provide new clues to the motives behind the Chumash revolt.

Inspiration for the Alta California *confesionarios* came from two principal sources: the decrees of the Provincial Councils of Lima in the sixteenth century and the practical experience of earlier missionaries in converting Indians in Mexico. As earlier alluded, missionaries had been exhorted by the church to evangelize in local Indian dialects. The Second Provincial Council of Lima, 1567, forbade the hearing of confession through an interpreter. In 1583 the Third Provincial Council went further and adjured priests to preach their sermons and to conduct all religious instruction in the language of those to be converted.³⁵ Hence, a conscientious confessor needed a phrase book to facilitate exhortation and confession.

The form of the phrase book evolved from European examples of how to confess a penitent and from Mexican aboriginal experience. The most common formula for confession involved talking the subject through the Ten Commandments. Traditionally then, sins of idolatry would be confessed under the First Commandment, sexual transgressions under the Sixth and Ninth. In confessing Aztecs and others, early missionaries learned of the local importance Indians could attach to such things as dreams and the cry of the owl. They also learned to ask the familial relationship of sexual partners.³⁶

In Alta California the first *confesionario* to have survived came from Mission Santa Barbara. In December 1798, Fray Juan Cortés wrote a guide in Spanish and Barbareño to aid in teaching and confessing the Indians. His *confesionario* followed the pattern of questioning by Commandment. Under the First, Cortés formulated questions to discover whether the confessed had scattered seeds in the field, believed in dreams, believed in the power of one who claimed to cure by the use of water or the acorn, believed in the owl?³⁷ Truthful responses to such questions could help determine *pantap* cult activity.

Questions regarding sexual activity reveal an awareness of the range of Chumash tolerated sexual behavior. "Fornication, adultery,

masturbation, sodomy, incest, and intercourse with animals are among the practices that appear in the Cortés *confesionario*."³⁸ Those questions came in response to examination for violations of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. Queries about infanticide, abortion, and coitus interruptus came under the Fifth Commandment.

That Cortés, a priest new both to Alta California and to Mission Santa Barbara, could devise such a canny series of questions suggests that he had the assistance of a veteran counselor. That counselor appears to have been the remarkable Fray José Seán, a priest who served twice as president of the missions and who dedicated thirty-five years of his life to service in the Alta California missions.³⁹ Seán undoubtedly advised the younger Cortés to question his charges about ritual practices associated with the *Pantap* cult and to inquire extensively about sexual practices. Seán, stationed at San Buenaventura, compiled information over the years to help himself in the same duties.

Within eight years of the Cortés *confesionario* a circular order arrived in Alta California imposing new duties regarding confession. On the first day of Lent missionaries were to give all neophytes special instructions about their annual confession and henceforth the priests at each mission would record on a "separate account" all who received the Sacraments of Penance or the Eucharist.⁴⁰ Annual Lenten confession, an ancient Roman Catholic tradition reaffirmed by the Council of Trent (1545-1563),⁴¹ constituted an indispensable part of the spiritual life of the faithful. Confession, the revealing of sins to a priest, especially the grave mortal sins, had to precede taking the Eucharist and the reception of both sacraments was required annually during the forty-day period before Easter known as Lent. Given the frequently staggering workload of the priests, it seemed unreasonable to require them to confess their charges more than once a year.

Over time, Fray Seán had observed and questioned the Indians in his area and he composed his own *confesionario* sometime between 1815-1819.⁴² In it he went further than Cortés in questioning confessants and his deeper knowledge of the Chumash, gained over the intervening twenty years, clearly informed his queries. In keeping with convention, he patterned his guide to confess sins against the Ten Commandments. He exceeded the queries about scattering seeds, belief in dreams, and other matters he must have suggested

to Cortés by asking pointedly about shamen and curers. He had learned the Chumash names for medicine man and good healer, even though he had contempt for them and could interpose the more contemptuous Chumash name if he so chose.⁴³ Under the Fifth Commandment he went beyond questions about abortion, infanticide, and birth control to ask if the confessant had ever become intoxicated on *pespibata*. In these two series of questions Señán revealed that he had learned to probe and to disturb Chumash religious life in the *Pantap* cult, village life affected by shamen and curers, and personal life touching upon *datura* usage.

But in the realm of sexual conduct Señán rose to the role of ethnographer, asking questions that would have been the envy of Harrington. Not only did he ask the earlier questions about homosexual, heterosexual, sodomite and animal sex, he asked marital status, blood relationship and fictive kinship both direct and indirect of the sexual partners. In these questions confessing sins against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments, Señán probed and must have begun to disturb the Chumash sibling relationship. This virtually ideal ethnographer's questionnaire had not been crafted to gather information per se but to modify behavior. Eliciting answers to these questions gave the priest an ongoing view of the survivability of the culture undergoing the stress of conversion.

Organizing questions according to a European sense of order did not necessarily correspond to Indian experience. Hence, questions pertaining to religious practices, confessed under the First Commandment, imply a distinction between religious and social activities that the Chumash probably did not make, or at least did not make in the same way. Consequently, a cursory glance at the *confesionarios* of Señán and Cortés gives the impression that sexual irregularities more than religious backsliding absorbed the attention of the priests. That impression, undoubtedly caused by the practice of confessing sexual sins under the Sixth and Ninth Commandments combined, has led to the unfounded conclusion that religious backsliding was not a serious problem⁴⁴ or, conversely, that Chumash religion and culture had been virtually exterminated during the mission period.⁴⁵ The significant revelation of the *confesionarios* is that Chumash culture remained vital but came increasingly under Franciscan scrutiny and attack, especially after 1820. Over time, Señán and others must have come to realize that Chumash social behavior, particularly its sexual expression, undergirded the old society. The Lenten season, beginning on Ash Wednesday and ending on Easter

Sunday became an annual Franciscan probe of the indigenous culture, an annual inquisition that could only have intensified as years passed and Chumash converts began to change their behavior.

Cultural Survival Struggle

Historical records provide only shadowy glimpses of the survival struggle of Chumash culture. In 1801, in the midst of a series of attacks of pneumonia and pleurisy which had struck the neophytes at Santa Barbara, an Indian woman who had used a native curer experienced a *datura*-induced vision. In it she encountered the Chumash earth goddess *Chupu* who told her that all baptized Indians would die and only those would be spared who cancelled their baptism by hand washing with a water known as "tears of the sun." News of the vision spread and Chumash from the islands to the interior came to see this woman and to propitiate *Chupu*. Three days elapsed before the priests discovered the movement and by means unknown, but probably including public repudiation of the dream, they stopped it. Both the speed with which the movement spread and its secrecy alarmed the local priests.⁴⁶

Both before and after the uprising, as one informant remembered, the Indians of Santa Barbara would:

...secretly build little temples of sticks and brush, on which they hung bits of rag, cloth and other paraphernalia depositing on the inside tobacco [*pespibata*] and other articles used by them as presents to the unseen spirits. This was an occasion of great wrath to the padres who never failed to chastize the idolators when detected.⁴⁷

The persistence of Chumash culture in the face of Christianization makes it nearly impossible then to accept the opinion of a priest at La Purísima in 1810 that worship of *Chupu* had been extirpated there.⁴⁸ Rotating Indians among the missions actually facilitated and reinforced cult survival.

Even as the friars deepened their probe of Indian daily life, external political events caused the Spanish to arm and organize the Indians militarily, making the uprising possible. In 1818 Hippolyte Bouchard, a privateer from Buenos Aires, threatened to invade the Alta California coast. He ultimately did so but without serious effect. In response to his menacing behavior enterprising priests in the Chumash area mobilized their neophytes to fight. No one undertook the task with greater vigor or effect than Fray Antonio Ripoll

at Mission Santa Barbara. He organized and trained 180 Indians divided into an infantry composed of 100 archers reinforced by fifty more carrying "chopping knives" and a cavalry of thirty lancers. Ripoll let them choose their corporals and sergeants but he had the commanding officer at the presidio select the company commander. He called his force the "*Compañía de Urbanos Realistas de Santa Bárbara*."⁵⁰ At La Purísima Fray Mariano Payeras organized a similar defense force of undetermined size and wrote feelingly to Governor Pablo Vicente de Solá, "It would cause me joy if you could see the preparation and enthusiasm of these Indians."⁵⁰

These military preparations, envisioned by the priests as defensive, served as sound educational instruction for the Indians in the organization and tactics of European warfare. In their pre-contact state the Chumash hunted and occasionally fought in small bands. In response to Bouchard's threat they learned to mass and drill in larger units. Since the Chumash valued craftsmen and organized them into guilds in the missions, the guild for bow-maker, for example, must have become prominent after 1818.⁵¹ Military organization superimposed upon mission organization provided new networks for preserving the old social structure and taught a new sense of power and the awareness of large group, collective action. Formal military training, added to the learning which could be obtained from watching the padres fire their mission cannons on significant feast days,⁵² all permitted the Chumash to learn effective ways of resisting Spanish power militarily. This training coincided with the tightening of the European cultural noose through the confessional after 1820. In 1824 the largest uprising in mission history began on February 21, the day before Sexagesima Sunday and eleven days before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. The Chumash deferred another cycle of interrogation that year.

Levantamiento!: Fight

Ostensibly, the sufficient cause of the uprising came from the flogging of a Purísima neophyte at Mission Santa Ynez by order of the corporal of the guard, Valentin Cota.⁵³ The neophyte had come to visit a relative being held prisoner. In revenge Indians from both missions attacked the soldiers with bows and arrows at Santa Ynez on Saturday afternoon February 21. In the skirmish the Indians lost two men, set a building afire, and continued to besiege the guard and a priest until a reinforcement of soldiers arrived the next day. Military augmentation forced the Indians to retreat to La Purísima.

At La Purísima Indians had risen the same afternoon and besieged the soldiers who took refuge with their families and the two padres in a storeroom. Having exhausted their ammunition by the next day, the soldiers, through the priests, sought and secured a safe passage to Santa Ynez. One priest who remained behind with the Indians was treated gently, but his undoubted blandishments to desist were ignored. The Indians dug themselves in for a siege by erecting "palisade fortifications" and cutting weapon slits in the adobe walls of the church and nearby buildings. They wheeled the ceremonial cannons into place to command a field of fire in front of the mission church and prepared to resist the expected Mexican counter-attack. They had to wait a month.

The revolt had begun with deliberate, coordinated acts of violence at both Santa Ynez and La Purísima. Revenge for the flogging may have been the only "legitimate" reason that the Europeans could discern for the attack but it seems clear from the unfolding of events that the Indian conspirators envisioned a movement more of liberation than of vengeance. One of the major foci of the campaign would be the military engagement at La Purísima, an opportunity to display how well they had learned their military lessons. But they also sought to incorporate more Indians, both mission and non-mission into their plans.

After attacking and burning at Santa Ynez, the Indians sent a messenger to Santa Barbara to seek out, inform, and elicit the aid of the Chumash alcalde, Andrés.⁵⁴ A similar message was also sent to the alcalde at San Buenaventura but that Indian turned the courier over immediately to the guard which incarcerated him. Nothing further eventuated at San Buenaventura. But at Santa Barbara Andrés had other plans. Instead of seeking the guard, he went to Padre Antonio Ripoll, the man who had organized, equipped, and trained the Indian *Compañía de Urbanos Realistas*. Andrés claimed that Ynezeños and Puríseños threatened him with death if he did not join them and he asked Ripoll to have the mission guard removed. Ripoll called together two other trusted neophytes who understood Spanish well and he told them all not to fear. He then left the mission for the presidio to seek the presidio commander's written order to recall the mission guard.

Upon returning to the mission, Ripoll found the Indians assembled in their kitchen fully armed with bows, arrows, and the "chopping knives" or machetes. Since he kept the weapons for the Com-

pañía locked away,⁵⁵ only Andrés could have authorized their distribution. Ripoll seemingly ignored this fact and instead told the upset Indians that he had written orders for the guard to retire. With the Indians accompanying him, Ripoll presented the command to the guard. Indians further demanded that the soldiers leave their muskets and when two protested, they were slightly wounded by machete blows. Ripoll, acting as escort, accompanied the soldiers back to the presidio where the commander responded to the casualties by dispatching troops to the mission in a show of force.

Seeing the soldiers approach, the armed Indians "came out in force to confront the troops." The skirmish cost the soldiers four men with minor arrow wounds and the Indians lost three dead and two wounded. For unexplained reasons the presidio force withdrew leaving the Indians masters in the mission. The Chumash then entered the storeroom and Padre Ripoll's room where they took "everything in the shape of clothing and money," but, allegedly, nothing else. They closed and locked their quarters and the church, withdrew from the mission, and proceeded up the canyon behind the mission to a spot less than thirty miles away to await developments.

When the armed Chumash had departed, the soldiers returned to the mission environs and abused whatever old and decrepit Indians they could find. They managed to kill five Indians in their forays. Yet another detail came to the mission on Tuesday and systematically sacked both the Indians' quarters and Ripoll's room. Ripoll tried to control his sense of outrage at the soldiers' conduct and he maintained contact with the Indians in the hills through messages exchanged with Andrés by courier. Andrés convinced Ripoll that the Indians had left the mission solely as a consequence of the soldiers' mistreatment of them and that fear for their lives prevented their return. Ripoll's entreaties that they return were defeated when Andrés had two Indian servants from the presidio inform the hiding Chumash that the soldiers intended to kill them all. With that news they fled farther into the interior to the *tulares* in the southern San Joaquin valley. The valued alcalde Andrés, in whom Ripoll had placed great trust, had deceived the padre. He conspired to attack the mission with a mixed force of gentiles and neophytes but, failing to secure sufficient support from non-mission Indians, Andrés took his people to the *tulares*.⁵⁶ While these Indians remained in the interior, the Mexican force, sent to punish the original insurgents, arrived at La Purísima.

Upon learning of the uprising and the Indian intention of fortifying La Purísima, the governor of Alta California ordered a force dispatched against them. A combined unit of 109 cavalry, infantry, and artillery with one four-pound cannon all under the command of Lieutenant José María Estrada arrived on the morning of March 16. Estrada deployed troops to prevent Indian retreat and prepared to confront the main body of defenders.⁵⁷ By then the Indian force had grown to over 400 including mission and non-mission Indians, some of the latter being Yokuts from the *tulares*.⁵⁸ When the soldiers came within range, the Indians began musket fire, followed by the discharge of the one pound ceremonial cannons while they simultaneously let fly a volley of arrows. They could learn to load and fire the cannons by observation but problems of range and trajectory could only be learned by the practice which they lacked. Their cannon fire availed them nothing while the Mexican cannon succeeded in shattering part of the adobe walls. Seeing themselves thwarted in an escape attempt, the Indians asked a priest to intercede. Fray Antonio Rodríguez, who had remained with the Indians from the beginning, negotiated their surrender. The Indians suffered sixteen dead and a large number wounded, the soldiers sustained three wounded, one of them fatally. The Mexicans tried and executed seven Indians for murder, condemned to ten years presidio labor and perpetual exile four leaders of the resistance and sentenced eight more to eight years each of presidio labor. The attempt to test their newfound military prowess against their European teachers had failed as had their attempt to coordinate a pan-Indian military resistance. The fight at La Purísima has been the basis for interpreting the uprising as a blow struck primarily against Mexican authority in Alta California.⁵⁹ What the Indians would have done had they prevailed cannot be known. But if the behavior of some of the Santa Barbara neophytes is indicative, then return to Chumash culture, with modifications, was an important goal. Evidence for this plan first emerged in the *tulares*.

Levantamiento!: Flight

Several Indians observed Chumash behavior under Andrés while they were all in the *tulares*. Five Indians representing four missions responded to questions about that conduct before an officer of the Santa Barbara presidio on June 1.⁶⁰ They all agreed that the neophytes did not pray. Four of them reported that gambling both in old Indian ways and with Hispanic playing cards, using money

to wager, constituted the principal means of passing time both night and day. In matters of sexual mores these witnesses were particularly revealing. The Indian, his mission, and his observation follow:

Zenen (Senen), La Purísima: that the married and single men lived all mixed up and did what they wished with all women, regardless of their marital [Christian]? status.

Pelagio, San Fernando: That the married and single men, Christians and heathen, were living intermingled and were doing whatever they wished.

Alberto, San Gabriel: that when the Christians got to the valley they exchanged their women with those of the heathen without distinction of married or unmarried for they were all mixed up with one another.

Leopoldo, Santa Barbara: that the Christians exchanged their women with the heathen and vice versa, likewise the unmarried girls were all interchanged.

Fernando Huililiaset, Santa Barbara: that also he noticed the married couples consorting with one another, but no one knew who was married and who was not for they were all mixed up.⁶¹

The observations produced by this inquiry reveal the priests' concerns about prayer, idleness, and sexual activity of the neophytes away from their supervision. But from a Chumash standpoint, they partially reveal an attempt to reestablish a modified culture. The apparent abandoning of Christian prayer, the alteration of their old wagering games to include cards and Mexican money in the place of walnut-shell dice and strings of sea-shells, and the resumption of open sexual access among neophytes and gentiles, consistent with a restoration of the primacy of the sibling relationship, all speak to this new life.

That this behavior pattern had been planned seems congruent with the Indian reply to Padre Ripoll when he first asked them to return. "We shall maintain ourselves with what God will provide us in the open country. Moreover, we are soldiers, stonemasons, carpenters, etc., and we will provide for ourselves by our work."⁶² In short, they had learned skills in the mission which they could apply to the environment if they so chose. For a large number of Santa Barbara neophytes, building a new life based upon the best of the old and the newly learned, constituted a major goal.

A window into this cultural revitalization is provided by the only known Chumash version of the revolt, an oral tradition related

to Harrington by an Ynezeño woman.⁶³ In the account the revolt began with an act of deception committed by an Indian sacristan or page. He told the neophytes that they were to be punished by the priests and he told the priests that they were to be shot with arrows by the Indians on Sunday and so the priests did not hold mass. The Indians previously had used *pespibata*, the proxy for *datura*, clandestinely. Medicine men, shamen undoubtedly of the *?antap* cult, came forward and announced that the priests could not harm those protected with their magic. Some believed that the cannons would discharge only water or that musket fire would not penetrate their flesh. Magic made it possible for two armed Indians to enter the mission guardhouse through the keyhole. Another Indian and his horse disappeared in the grip of the soldier Valentin [Cota?] and both horse and rider reappeared on a hilltop beyond the soldier's reach. Chumash practiced divination in a new way by cutting a sacred string in half and placing it on the ground in the form of a cross. An older method of divination by arrows continued. The story ended with the surrender of the Indians at La Purísima and the discovery of the sacristan's deception.⁶⁴

Revitalization of the Chumash culture and the *?antap* cult, combining the Christian elements that suited them, and mobilized by fighting that permitted some to make a military stand and some to flee to the interior to create the new life, all characterized the 1824 uprising.

But if the governor of Alta California would not countenance a Chumash military stand at La Purísima neither would he accept their flight to the *tulares*. After a first expedition had to turn back because of harsh weather, having accomplished nothing more than the killing of an unarmed, bound Indian prisoner, another larger force departed Santa Barbara for the interior on June 2.⁶⁵ Fray Vicente de Sarria, president of the missions and, at his direction, Padre Ripoll, both accompanied the column commanded by Captain Pablo de la Portilla. The Mexican force met with another in the interior and together they numbered some 130 troops and two four-pound cannons. Portilla also brought a pardon from the governor. On June 10 the troops encountered runaway Indians commanded by a man called Jaime who came out to confer with Portilla. With the assistance of Padres Sarria and Ripoll, the two negotiated a surrender but on June 11 many of the Indians fled deeper into the *tulares* upon hearing a rumor that the military force would chastise them and the par-

don was false. Jaime succeeded in reestablishing trust and the neophytes who wished to return to the mission came over to the soldiers. Two days later the assembled group celebrated the feast of the Holy Trinity with Sunday mass. Afterwards several of the neophytes informed the expedition commander that he needed to appoint new *alcaldes* since the authority of the old ones had expired during their absence from the mission. Captain Portilla then appointed three new *alcaldes* none of whom was the Andrés so valued by Ripoll.⁶⁶ During their stay in the *tulares* some of the Chumash lost faith in Andrés and set him aside when the soldiers appeared.

After appointing new Indian *alcaldes*, Portilla sent them out with a few soldiers to bring back more of the runaways. They met with mixed success. The main column began its return to Santa Bárbara while still leaving search parties out to bring back stragglers. The feast of Corpus Christi fell on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday and it found the major force still enroute. The Indians constructed an arbor in the wilderness and sang the Christian songs of praise and thanksgiving while Sarria and Ripoll celebrated the mass.⁶⁷ Those Chumash who wanted to return to the mission had acquiesced. Participation in two sung masses in the *tulares* in four days and acceptance of new *alcaldes* signified their renewed submission to the mission. But many others remained fugitive pursuing the new life, perhaps nearly half the original mission population.⁶⁸ Another group of approximately fifty neophytes, who had fled to Santa Cruz Island the night of February 22 in the two Santa Barbara mission canoes, could not sustain their flight. Scarcity of food probably caused them to begin to return to the mainland sometime after May 5⁶⁹ and by June 28 only ten remained.⁷⁰ Some of those who returned quietly submitted to the mission while others did not.⁷¹

When the soldiers, padres, and contrite neophytes returned from the *tulares* to Santa Barbara on June 21, 1824 the Mexicans concluded their account of the revolt. From the Chumash perspective it was not yet finished. A group of neophytes, perhaps including Andrés, traveled deeper into the interior, well beyond the *tulares*, into a region of the Yokuts in what is now northeastern Kern County and they settled in the vicinity of a mountain pass. They were discovered living there some ten years later by a North American trapping party. Zenas Leonard, a member of the trapping party led by Joseph Reddeford Walker whose name that pass now bears, left a brief but explicit account of those Indians.

Having spoken at length to the former mission Indians of Santa Barbara, he wrote that they:

... rebelled against the authority of the country, robbed the Church of all its golden images and candlesticks, and one of the priests of several thousand dollars in gold and silver, when they retreated to the spot we found them—being at least five or six hundred miles distant from the nearest Spanish settlement.⁷²

Church images remained in the control of the chiefs according to Leonard, but in all likelihood the shamen of the *Pantap* cult used them along with traditional Chumash artifacts to sustain their spiritual power and the life of the village.

These Chumash, at the time of Leonard's contact seven or eight hundred strong, had adopted some European-taught agricultural practices such as the planting and harvesting of corn, pumpkins, melons, and other foodstuffs. They also rode and bartered horses. Their spiritual and material culture represented a mixing of Spanish and Chumash in a place remote enough to permit it to grow.

They did not survive to be counted in the enumeration of 1850. A serious epidemic of malaria unleashed in the interior of California from 1830-1833, probably had been introduced to the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys by fur trapping expeditions from the Great Plains. The Walker party was such an expedition and it traversed those valleys in 1833. A debilitating illness to whites, malaria proved fatal to Indians. A careful student of the epidemic estimated that it reduced California Indian population by seventy-five percent from 1833-1846.⁷³ According to Leonard, the Walker expedition contacted the interior Chumash in April 1834 and spent one night among them. The next day Walker hired two Indians to guide them over the pass. Perhaps this visit introduced malaria to these Chumash and finally ended their resistance to the mission.

Conclusions

To Mexican authorities the most obvious lesson learned from the uprising was not to allow the Indians access to weapons. Accordingly, the president of the missions complied with the governor's request and dispatched a circular to all missions on July 22, 1824. Upon receipt of the order the priests at each mission were to surrender to the nearest presidio "all firearms, lances, and chopping knives."⁷⁴ The Indians had been disarmed. Padre Ripoll's trust and confidence in his neophytes to defend the mission had been betrayed. In the

aftermath of violence that confidence had been irrevocably set aside by higher order. Ripoll returned to his tasks discouraged and sick at heart but not defeated.⁷⁵

For the priests and the Indians who returned, there came a rededication to faith and to mission life. A separation of the old culture from the new one being created at the mission came to take hold and to grow. The old ways of the shamen and the *?antap* cult, as well as the primacy of the sibling bond, truly faded from the Christian environment after the revolt.⁷⁶ Instead of the principal friction point, the Lenten season became the principal focus of bonding between Indian and priest in the mission. Many years after the missions had been secularized and fallen into ruin, and eighty years after the uprising, a priest came to Santa Ynez to minister to whatever slight congregation there might be. The Christmas season passed with few in attendance at mass. He expected nothing more for Easter. But just before Holy Week a sixty-seven year old Indian man presented himself and offered to act as server. Beginning with Holy Thursday Indians, in numbers previously unknown to the priest, began coming to the church for services. He heard confessions long into the night. By Easter Sunday Indians had gathered from the mountains, from across the mountains, from Lompoc and from part of Santa Barbara and they filled the church for mass.⁷⁷ The astonished priest had not expected such a celebration of Easter at the site of the 1824 uprising.

Why the Chumash chose 1824 to initiate their movement is a matter of speculation. It is known that a large comet became visible in the sky over southern California in December 1823 and persisted well into March 1824. After the first of the year it developed what appeared to be two tails. Comets held special significance for Chumash for they believed that such fire in the sky foretold a new beginning, a sudden change. Such symbolism assumed greater meaning since it first appeared in December, the month the Chumash believed marked their own birth as a people.⁷⁸ Moreover, the year before, in December 1822, Fray Señán, whose confessional questions caused the Chumash much spiritual agony, became ill. He slowly declined and died in late summer 1823.⁷⁹ Taken together these two powerful signs may have provided the impetus to rise at that time.

The revolt cannot be seen simply as an Indian protest against the abuses of the Mexican soldiers. Certainly those abuses contributed to resentment. But the uprising provided the Chumash a military

umbrella under which individual Indians could choose to fight, as did those who came to La Purísima, or to flee as did those who took canoes to Santa Cruz Island or those who followed Andrés into the *tulares* and even out to Walker Pass. Those who fled sought to create a new culture based on a fusion of Chumash and Christian religious symbols and relying on European agricultural and ranching skills. A Chumash cave painting in the San Emigiliano mountains has been found to contain a blue pigment of European origin leading one archaeologist to date it from the 1824 revolt and flight.⁸⁰ The importance of the Christian artifacts to the Chumash deep in the interior helps to explain the kindness with which they treated the priests during the uprising. To the Indians the priests were powerful, possibly in a shamanistic sense implying helper as well. Padre Rodríguez at La Purísima stayed with them there and aided, when it became necessary, in their surrender. At Santa Barbara they entreated the aged Padre Antonio Jayme to join them in flight but he declined.⁸¹ Captain Portilla knew he needed the aid of the priests to bring in the Indians and Sarria and Ripoll succeeded in bringing back those who wished to return. The Chumash chose military targets to fight and religious targets to assist them in their quest for a new beginning.

The combination of rich ethnographic information from Harrington recently made available, combined with the detailed insights yielded by the *confesionarios*, provides a unique dual perspective on the complex 1824 Levantamiento! This study suggests that a search of mission, Mexican, and Spanish archives for additional *confesionarios* may prove fruitful for further research. Examples of confessional aids from other areas, such as Salinan or Coastanoan, or from the same Indian groups such as Gabrileño or Luiseño, might enhance our understanding of the Franciscan efforts to Christianize California's aboriginal inhabitants. At any rate, it should be clear from this reexamination of the 1824 uprising that, in the Chumash area at least, missionization conquered native culture only among those who genuinely converted.

NOTES

¹Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco: The History Company Publishers, 1886-1890), II: 527-538. Zephyrin Engelhardt, O.F.M., *The Missions and Missionaries of California*, Vol. III: *Upper California*, Part II: *General History* (4 vols., San Francisco: The James H. Barry Company, 1913), pp. 194-212.

²The most recent attempt at reassessing the 1824 revolt came before the Harrington material became generally available. E. Gary Stickel and Adrienne E. Cooper, "The Chumash

⁴²Madison S. Beeler, ed., *The Ventureño Confesionario of José Señán, O.F.M.*, in *University of California Publications in Linguistics* No. 47 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 4.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 27 and *passim*.

⁴⁴Kelsey, *The Doctrina and Confesionario of Juan Cortés*, p. 9., writes, "The *confesionario* seems not to place much importance on these practices [pagan religion], perhaps because backsliding was not a great problem at Santa Barbara."

⁴⁵For example, Campbell Grant, "Chumash: Introduction," *HBNAL*, VIII: 507.

⁴⁶Fray Estevan Tapis to José Joaquín Arrillaga, Governor of Alta California, March 1, 1805, cited in Robert F. Heizer, "A California Messianic Movement of 1801 Among the Chumash," *American Anthropologist*, XLIII (January-March 1941), 128-129; Hudson and Underhay, *Crystals in the Sky*, pp. 21-22, 72.

⁴⁷Arthur Woodward, "An Early Account of the Chumash," *The Masterkey* VIII (July 1934), 118-123, quotation on 122, my emphasis.

⁴⁸A.L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California*, p. 567, cited in Heizer, "A California Messianic Movement of 1801 Among the Chumash," p. 128, n. 3.

⁴⁹Zephyrin Engelhardt, O.F.M. *Santa Barbara Mission* (San Francisco: James H. Barry Company, 1923), pp. 118-120; Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., *Mission Santa Barbara, 1782-1965* (Santa Barbara: Kimberly Litho, 1965), pp. 80-84.

⁵⁰As translated and cited by Francis F. Guest, O.F.M., "Cultural Perspectives on California Mission Life," *Southern California Quarterly*, LXV (Spring 1983), 44-45.

⁵¹Hudson and Blackburn, *The Material Culture of the Chumash Interaction Sphere*, I: 26.

⁵²Juan B. Alvarado, *History of California* (1876), trans. by Earl R. Hewitt, p. 44, BL.

⁵³The account is drawn from Bancroft, *History of California*, II: 527-538 and corrected by Engelhardt, *The Missions and Missionaries of California*, III: 194-212. Additional notes augment, clarify, or correct these texts.

⁵⁴Either Andrés Corsino Guilaich or Andrés Uichaja. See Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., ed. and trans., "Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of the Chumash Revolt at Santa Barbara in 1824," *Southern California Quarterly*, LII (December 1970), 360, n. 21. This is the best single account of the uprising at Santa Barbara, but is incomplete. Unless otherwise cited all references to Ripoll's activity are from this source.

⁵⁵Engelhardt, *Mission Santa Barbara*, p. 120.

⁵⁶Testimony of Indian Alberto from San Gabriel mission, translated and cited by S.F. Cook, *Expeditions to the Interior of California: Central Valley, 1820-1840*, in *Anthropological Records*, Vol. 20 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), p. 153.

⁵⁷Engelhardt, *Missions and Missionaries of California*, III: 203-204; Bancroft, *History of California*, II: 531-532.

⁵⁸Fray Juan Cabot to Governor Luis Antonio Argüello, February 28, 1824 in Cook, *Expeditions to the Interior of California*, p. 152.

⁵⁹For example, Alvarado, *History of California*, p. 43; Antonio María Osio, *Historia de la California 1815-1848*, n.d., Mss, copy made for Hubert Howe Bancroft, 1878, *passim*; José de Jesús Vallejo, *Reminiscencias Históricas de California*, dictated to Enrique Cerruti for Hubert Howe Bancroft, 1874, p. 82 ff, all in BL.

⁶⁰Interrogatorio, Santa Barbara, June 1, 1824 in Cook, *Expeditions to the Interior of California*, pp. 153-154.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²Geiger, "Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of the Chumash Revolt at Santa Barbara in 1824," p. 352.

⁶³Thomas Blackburn, "The Chumash Revolt of 1824: A Native Account," *The Journal of California Anthropology*, II (Winter 1975), 223-227.

⁶⁴Hudson and Underhay, *Crystals in the Sky*, p.22

⁶⁵The account is based upon Pablo de la Portilla, "Report of the expedition to the tulares in pursuit of the rebel mission Indians," June 27, 1824 in Cook, *Expeditions to the Interior of California*, pp. 154-156; Bancroft, *History of California*, II: 533-536; Engelhardt, *Missions and Missionaries of California*, III: 205-207.

⁶⁶Portilla gives as the name of the alcalde Andrés Seugmatose, Cook, *Expeditions to the Interior of California*, p. 155, neither of the names for Andrés posited by Geiger in note 54 *supra*.

⁶⁷José Rafael Gonzales, "Experiences [sic] de un soldado de California," Cook, *Expeditions to the Interior of California*, p. 157.

⁶⁸Pablo de la Portilla to Luis Antonio Argüello, June 27, 1824 in *ibid.*, pp 156-157. See also Cook, *The Conflict Between the California Indian and White Civilization*, p. 60, Table 3.

⁶⁹Geiger, "Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of the Chumash Revolt at Santa Barbara in 1824," p. 357.

⁷⁰Pablo de la Portilla to Luis Antonio Argüello, June 28, 1824 in Cook, *Expeditions to the Interior of California*, p. 157.

⁷¹Hudson, "Chumash Canoes of Mission Santa Barbara: The Revolt of 1824," pp. 13-14.

⁷²John C. Ewers, ed., *Adventures of Zenas Leonard Fur Trader* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), pp. ix, 121-123, quotation at 122.

⁷³S.F. Cook, *The Epidemic of 1830-1833 in California and Oregon*, in *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology*, Vol. XLIII (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), pp. 303-326.

⁷⁴Circular from Vicente de Sarria, July 22, 1824, Archivo del Arzobispado de San Francisco, Tomo IV, parte 2, copy in BL.

⁷⁵Engelhardt, *The Missions and Missionaries of California*, III: 205-206; Geiger, *Franciscan Missionaries in Hispanic California*, pp. 207-208.

⁷⁶Hudson and Underhay, *Crystals in the Sky*, p. 22.

⁷⁷Mamie Goulet Abbot, *Santa Ines Hermosa: The Journal of the Padre's Niece* (2nd ed.; Montecito, Calif.: Sunwise Press, 1951), pp. 72-79.

⁷⁸Gerónimo Boscana, *Chinigichinich*, a revised and annotated version of Alfred Robinson's trans., annotations by John P. Harrington (Banning, Calif.: Malki Museum Press, 1978), pp. 89; 226, n. 246; Hudson and Underhay, *Crystals in the Sky*, pp. 99-100, 128, Table 2.

⁷⁹Fray Marcos Antonio de Vitoria to Prelate Fray Agustín Garijo, August 24, 1823, in *The Letters of José Señán, O.F.M.: Mission San Buenaventura, 1796-1823*, Paul D. Nathan, trans., and Lesley Byrd Simpson, ed. (San Francisco: John Howell Books, 1962), p. 171.

⁸⁰"Post Modernism, CA. 1824," *California*, X (July, 1985), 76-77.

⁸¹Geiger, "Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of the Chumash Revolt at Santa Barbara in 1824," p. 350.